

Draft Environmental Assessment



Four Corners Fishing Access Site Improvement Project

October 2007



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

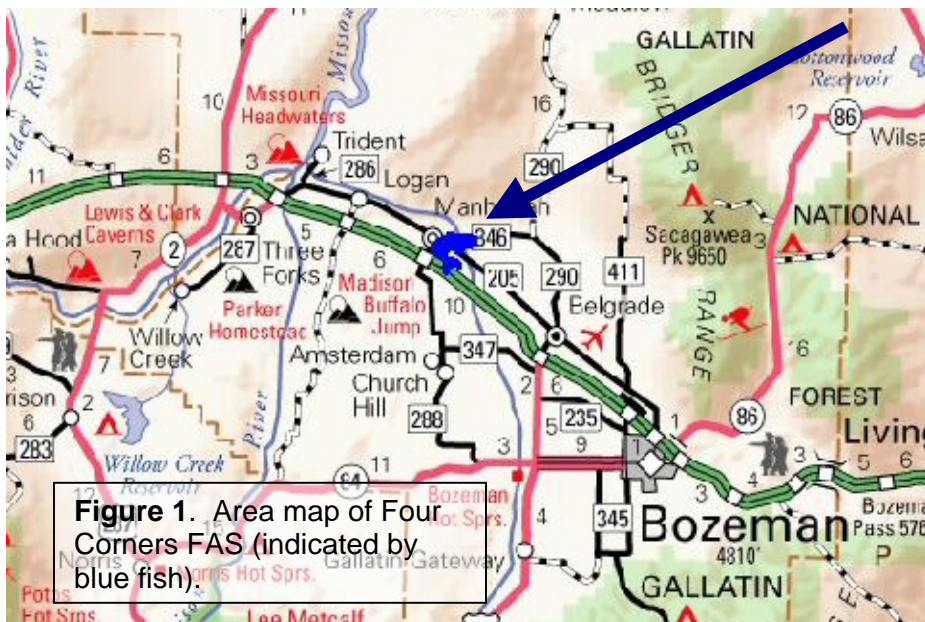
Four Corners Fishing Access Site Improvement Project

Draft Environmental Assessment

MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to implement site-protection measures at Four-Corners FAS by closing off a loop road and developing a new parking lot near the entrance. Selective thinning of vegetation on the site would also be a part of the project
2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:** The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605, which directs Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to ensure that this fishing access site function would be established.
3. **Name of project:** Four Corners Fishing Access Site Improvement Project.
4. **Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency):** Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks is the project sponsor.
5. **Construction Timeline:**
Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: Spring 2008
Estimated Completion Date: Summer 2008
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 50
6. **Location affected by proposed action (county, range and township):**
Four Corners FAS is located near the town of Manhattan (see Figure 1) in Gallatin County, T01N, R03E, Section 12.



7. Project size -- estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	<u>3</u>	Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
		Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Forestry	<u>0</u>
		Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

8. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits: permits will be filed at least 2 months prior to project start.

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>
N/A	

(b) Funding:

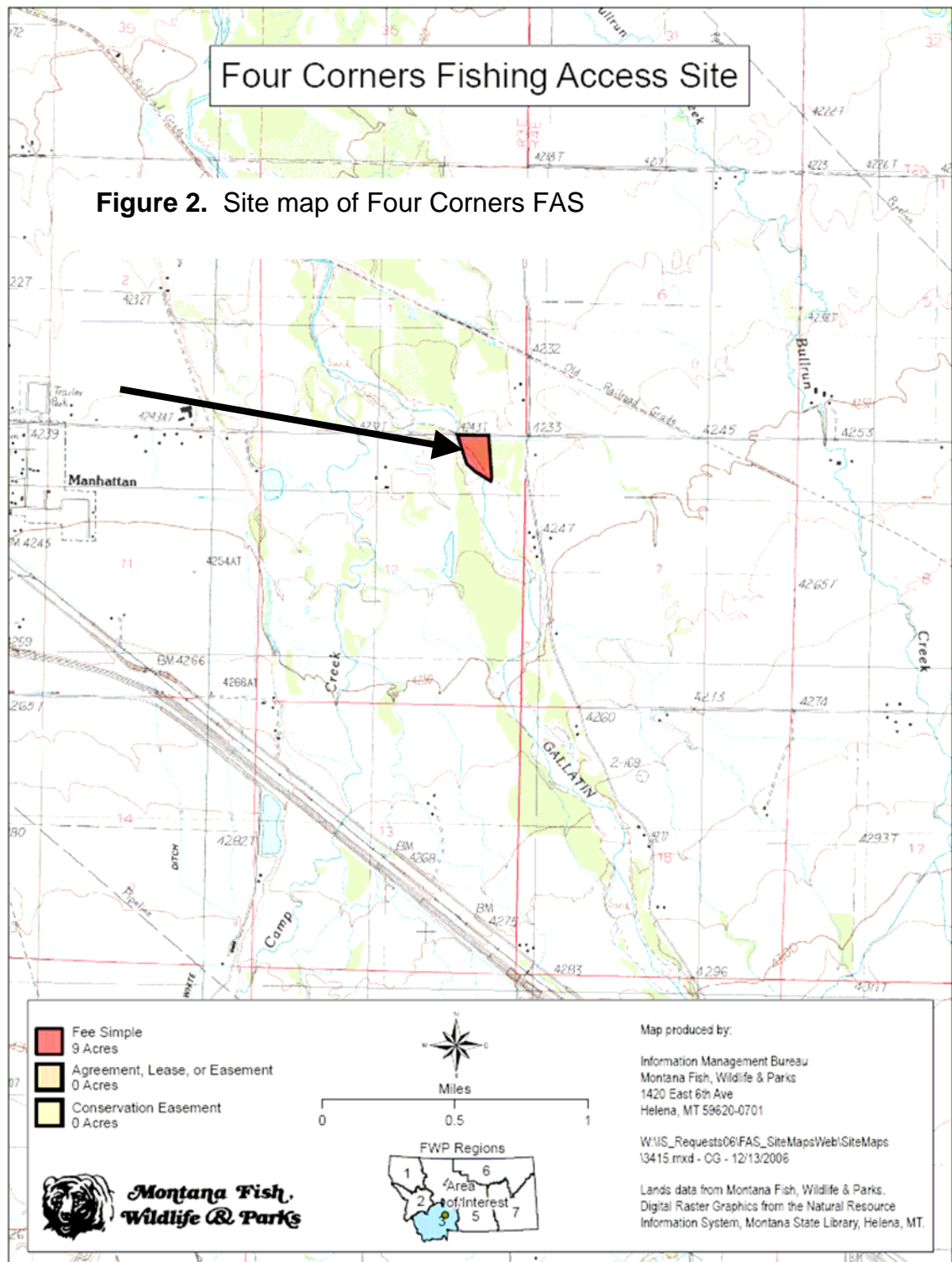
<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$17,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
N/A	

8. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

Four Corners Fishing Access Site is located about three miles east of Manhattan on the West Gallatin River at river mile 16 in FWP Region 3 (see Figures 1 and 2). Most users of this FAS engage in wade or stream bank fishing, as float fishing is closed on this stretch of the river (from Yellowstone National Park to the East Gallatin River). Game fish present include brown trout, rainbow trout, and mountain whitefish. Four Corners FAS is also accessible by the new CTEP (Community Transportation Enhancement Program) trail, which runs along Dry Creek Road. This site is day-use only, with approximately 16,825 visitors in 2006.



At issue is a continuing problem with chronic, excessive, and illegal garbage dumping at Four Corners FAS. The site has always been a target for illicit behavior, including off-

road traveling and late-night partying, as well as the prohibited dumping of trash. FWP officials have had to haul away several tons of yard waste, appliances, construction site wastes, abandoned cars, trash, and animal carcasses (see Figure 3). The site is conducive to these activities because it is thickly vegetated and hidden from view from the highway, and a precedent appears to have been set. The chronic problems at Four Corners caused FWP to close the site to vehicular traffic in 2002, forcing people to park at the entrance gate just off Dry Creek Road and walk in. Conditions improved considerably, and the site was reopened in 2004. Almost immediately, however, the same illegal activities resumed and FWP once again closed off the interior road in June of 2006, this time permanently.



Figure 3. Photo of trash and dead dog in interior of site.

Since the latest closure, visitors once again park their cars at the barricaded entrance and walk in. However, the existing entrance area is not large enough to allow more than two or three cars to park simultaneously, and there is insufficient room to turn around, forcing visitors to back down the entrance road, which is difficult and unsafe. Another problem that has surfaced is that people are beginning to dump trash along the entrance road (see Figure 4). The problem is not as severe as when people were dumping in the interior of the FAS, but it is still a nuisance to FWP staff, and offensive and unsanitary for visitors.

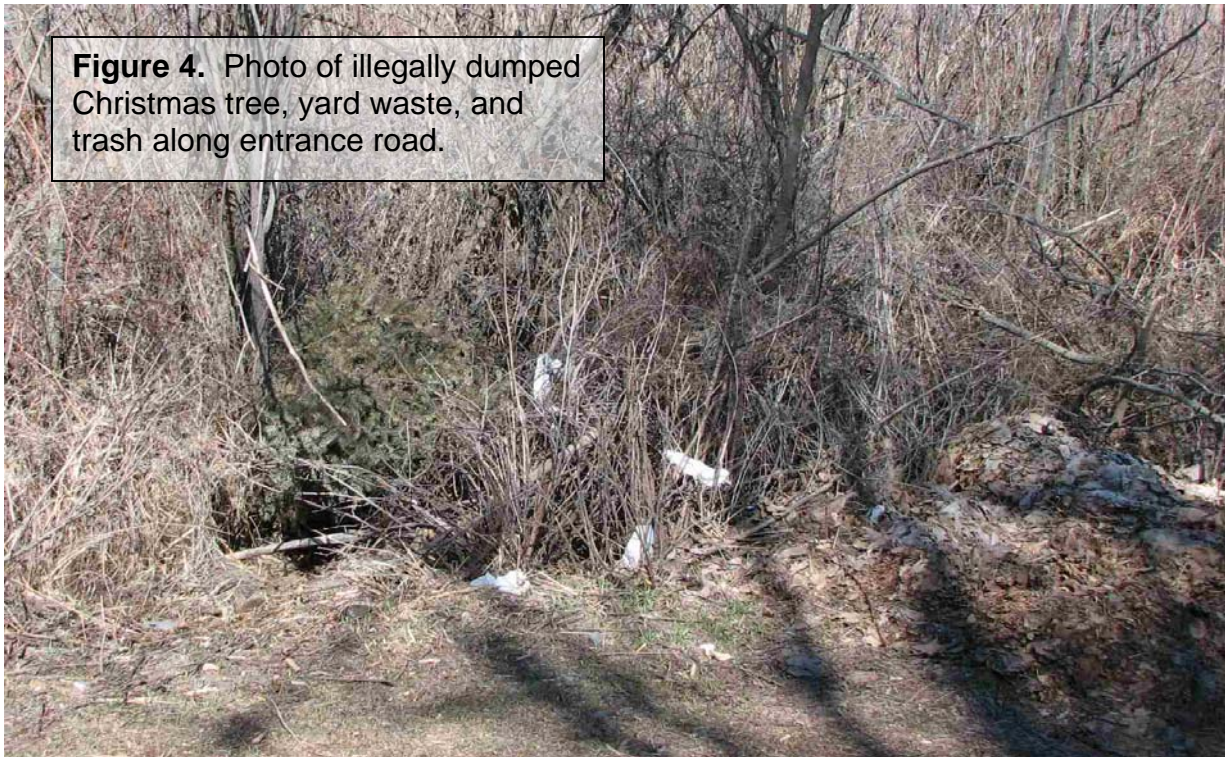


Figure 4. Photo of illegally dumped Christmas tree, yard waste, and trash along entrance road.

In light of these issues, FWP has proposed to build a 10-stall permanent gravel parking lot at the end of the entrance road and selectively remove vegetation between the new parking area and Dry Creek Road (see Figures 5, 6 and 7). As part of the project, new barrier rocks would also be placed across the entrance to the interior loop road, a new pipe gate would be installed for access by FWP staff at the eastern end of the loop road, a primitive trail built from the CTEP trail to the parking area, and, as funds allow, some reclamation of the interior loop road. Plans to install a concrete vault latrine have already been approved as part of a separate project and would be placed in between the parking area and CTEP trail.

FWP managers believe that a more developed site and increased visibility from the road would encourage more use by responsible citizens and discourage illegal behaviors. The combination of people walking on the CTEP trail, moving between the latrine and trail and latrine and parking area, and legitimate use of the FAS should sufficiently increase the amount of passive monitoring that occurs to a level where illegal dumping is too risky to continue to engage in. The situation at Four Corners has become a chronic cycle—the more dumping that occurs, the more offensive the site becomes, and fewer and fewer responsible citizens come who would be likely to alert authorities to illegal behavior. The proposed improvements to the site will hopefully attract these users back, thereby raising the standards of all visitors.

The vegetated area that would be thinned consists primarily of willows, small trees, and grasses. FWP would likely remove some trees and willows and mow the remaining vegetation to a height of two or three feet.

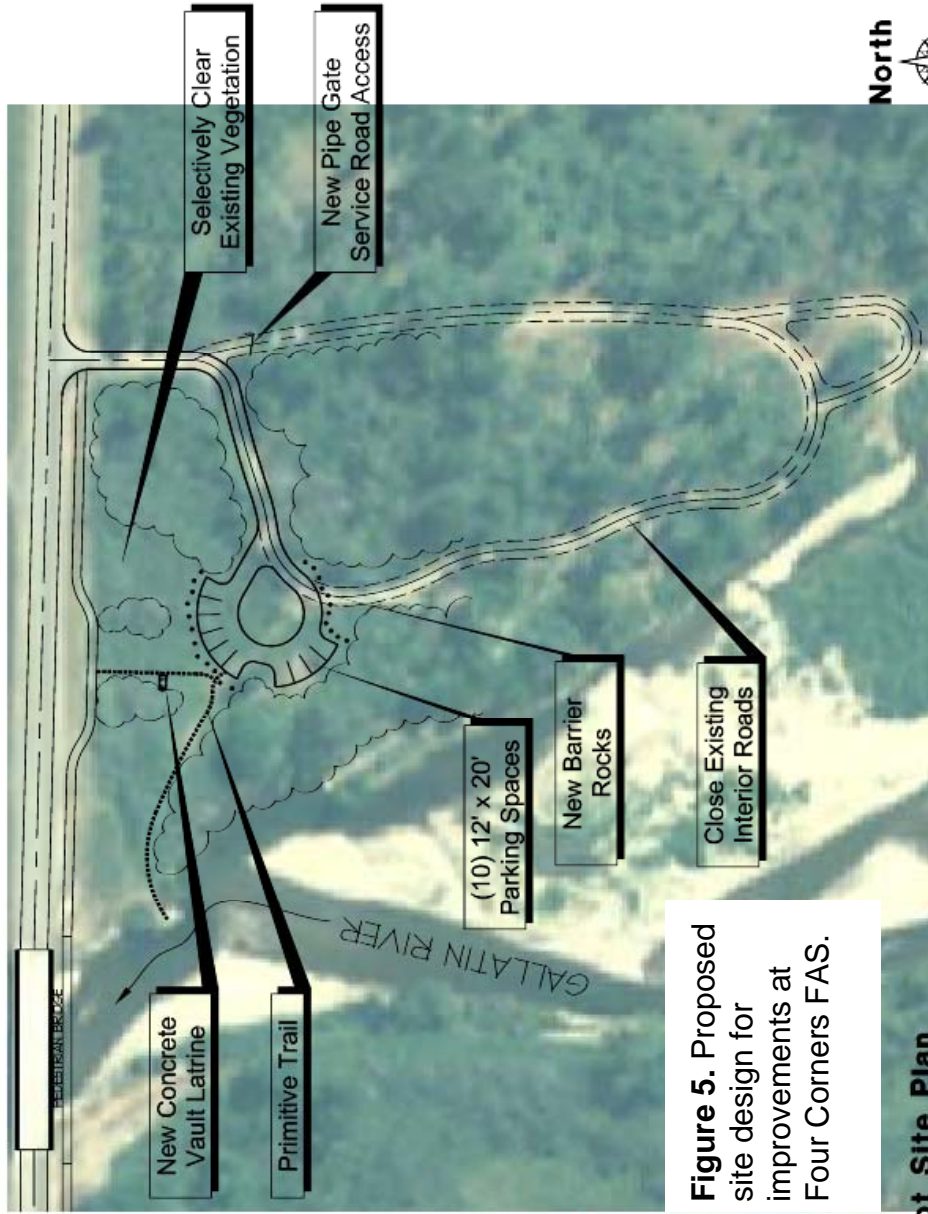
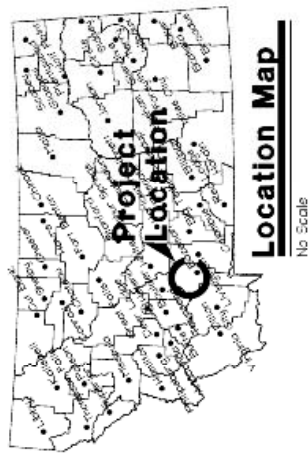


Figure 5. Proposed site design for improvements at Four Corners FAS.

DESIGNED BY:	DATE:	APPROVED BY:	DATE:
CHECKED BY:	DATE:	APPROVED BY:	DATE:



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Four Corners Fishing Access Site

Near Manhattan, Montana



SHEET 1 of 1



Figure 6. Proposed location of the new parking area.



Figure 7. Photo taken from CTEP trail showing area of selective vegetation removal.

The proposed action of permanently closing the interior loop road to the public at Four Corners FAS is unfortunate but necessary. The illegal dumping of trash at the site has been a chronic problem for over 15 years, and additional signs, patrolling, and local involvement (adopt-an-access site program) has not solved the problem. The implementation of various improvements to the site such as a parking area and latrine and the removal of vegetation will woo responsible users back, and the clearing of vegetation will allow citizens and law enforcement easier monitoring of the site and discourage prohibited behaviors. The proximity of Four Corners FAS to the CTEP trail gives it the potential to be a very popular destination for area recreationists, and the proposed actions would help make the site a nice place to visit once again.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

- 1. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:**

Alternative A: No Action

If no action is taken, the interior road at Four Corners FAS would remain closed, but the new parking area would not be constructed and the vegetation between the Dry Creek Road and the FAS entrance road would not be thinned. Under this scenario FWP managers expect that the current problems of illegal dumping and other prohibited behaviors would persist, which would continue to cause FWP additional maintenance hours and dollars to clean up and monitor. Parking would remain insufficient and creates unsafe situations when drivers attempt to turn around or back down the entrance road; and if people park on the shoulder of Dry Creek Road, which has happened during peak usage times. In addition, many people who used the site in the past have ceased to visit because of the abundance of trash and the frequency of illegal behaviors. If no action is taken to address the ongoing problems at Four Corners FAS, this contingent of historic users will have lost recreational opportunities because of a small number of inconsiderate people.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

In the preferred Alternative, FWP would initiate site protection and improvement projects at Four Corners FAS, including the construction of a 10-stall gravel parking area and foot path, installation of additional barrier rocks and a new service gate, and the selective removal of vegetation between the entrance road and parking area and the CTEP trail and Dry Creek Road. These actions would increase public safety and provide significant site protection measures. The interior of the FAS would be more completely closed off to the public, and the entrance road and parking area would be more easily monitored by FWP staff, law enforcement officers, and the public. Illegal activities would diminish and visitation by law-abiding citizens would increase. Four Corners FAS would once again be a pleasant local attraction and recreational destination, instead of a source of problems.

- 2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

There are no formal stipulations of mitigation or other controls associated with the proposed action. This action does not involve any permits or granting of a license on which stipulations would be placed.

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X			1b
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 1a. The construction of the parking lot would not affect geologic substructure or soil stability.
- 1b. Soil would be disturbed and over-covered during the construction of the parking area.
- 1c. No unique geologic features would be destroyed, covered, or modified by the proposed action.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X			2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)						
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 2a. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions will be created by heavy equipment during construction, but would end after completion of the project.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)						
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)						
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. It is unlikely that the proposed project would result in any discharge into adjacent surface water. FWP would ensure that Best Management Practices were employed during construction to minimize that risk.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X			4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X			4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?						
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):4a.

- 4a. The proposed project would require the removal of approximately 1/10 acre of vegetation for the parking lot and selective thinning of approximately ½ acre of trees and shrubs. Vegetation in the project area is comprised mostly of willows, forbs and grasses. These plant species are common and well-represented locally and regionally, and the overall effect would not be significant.
- 4b. Please see comment 4a.
- 4c. There are no documented observations of any threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species within the proposed project site or the larger Four Corners FAS area.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X			5c.
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		x				5g.
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)						
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)						
j. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish and Wildlife (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 5c. The removal of vegetation for the parking lot and improved sight lines would likely result in the displacement of several small non-game animal species in the immediate area.
- 5f. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Database showed the presence of Bald Eagles within the larger Gallatin River area, but there are no recorded observations of this species within a mile of Four Corners FAS. Please see Appendix 2 for a complete discussion of species of concern found in the Four Corners FAS area.
- 5g. The proposed project would likely cause a decrease in illegal behaviors that stress wildlife populations.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a.
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 6a. There would be a temporary increase in noise level during construction of the parking area and associated projects, but would end after completion of the project. It is unlikely that any residences would be affected by the noise.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				7a.
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7a. There would be no alteration or interference with the existing land use in the greater Four Corners FAS area.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X positive			8c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)						
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 8a. There is a slight risk of small petroleum leaks or spills from heavy equipment during the construction of the parking area and associated projects. This risk can be minimized by the use of Best Management Practices (BMP's) during all phases of the project.
- 8c. The creation of a parking area would increase public safety.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				9b.
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X			9e.
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 9a. The proposed project would not affect the location, distribution, density, growth rate, or social structure of the nearby communities of Manhattan and Belgrade, but the suggested actions would have a positive influence on these communities nonetheless. The chronic problems at Four Corners FAS have been the subject of press releases, articles, and letters to the editor, and have been the source of considerable embarrassment for many local citizens. These people do not wish the offensive conditions at Four Corners FAS to reflect poorly on their communities, and have initiated various efforts to address the problem themselves, such as “adopting” the site and attempting to monitor visitors. The proposed project would make it more likely that such efforts are ultimately successful, and once again make the site an attraction that local people can be proud of.
- 9e. The addition of a parking area would end the occurrence of visitors to the FAS parking on the shoulder of Dry Creek Road. Visitation to the FAS would likely increase, but the entrance approach is well-sighted and should not cause additional traffic hazards.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e.
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 10a. The proposed action would not have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services.
- 10e. The cost of the project is estimated at \$17,000. Funding would come from FWP's Site Protection Fund.
- 10f. Additional maintenance costs for Four Corners FAS are estimated to be \$3,000/yr, including costs for latrine pumping .

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)						11c.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)						
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

11c. Please see Attachment A for Tourism Report.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)						
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- 12a. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) issued a concurrence that there would be a low likelihood of impact to cultural resources by the proposed parking lot construction project at Four Corners FAS. Please see copy of concurrence letter in Attachment B.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

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**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				13a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)						
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

13a. This EA found no significant impacts to the human or physical environment from the proposed action.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

This EA did not reveal any significant negative impacts to the physical and human environment stemming from the proposed action. No threatened or endangered species would be affected, and no unique or physical features would be disturbed. The proposed project would increase public safety, help to protect the site from illegal trash dumping and other activities, and attract responsible users back. Some vegetation would be permanently removed in the process, but the effect would not be significant. In short, the proposed project would considerably increase visitor enjoyment of the site without causing significant adverse affects to the environment.

PART V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 1. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any, and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

The public will be notified by way of a statewide press release, legal notices in the *Bozeman Chronicle* and the *Helena Independent Record*, and by public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>. Individual notices will be sent to the region's standard EA distribution list and to those that have requested one.

Duration of comment period:

A 30-day comment period is proposed. This level of public involvement is appropriate for this scale of project. The comment period will begin on October 1, 2007 and close on 5pm on October 31, 2007.

PART VI. EA PREPARATION

- 1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

Based on an evaluation of the primary, secondary, and cumulative impacts to the physical and human environment under the Montana Environmental Protection Act (MEPA), this environmental review found no significant impacts from the proposed project. In determining the significance of the impacts, FWP assessed the severity, duration, geographic extent, and frequency of the impact, the probability that the impact would occur or reasonable assurance that the impact would not occur, growth-inducing or growth inhibiting aspects of the impact, the importance to the state and to society of the environmental resource or value affected, and precedent that would be set as a result of the proposed action that would commit FWP to future actions; and potential conflicts with local, federal, or state laws. Therefore, an EA is the appropriate level of review and an EIS is not required.

2. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Allan Kuser	Tom Greason	Linnaea Schroeer-Smith
FAS Coordinator	Region 3 FAS Manager	Independent Contractor
1420 East Sixth Ave	1400 South 19th	1027 9 th Ave
Helena, MT 59601	Bozeman, MT 59718	Helena, MT 59601
(406)444-7885	(406)994-6987	(406)495-9620

3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Parks Division
Wildlife Division
Fisheries Division
Design & Construction Bureau
Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism
Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information
System (NRIS)

APPENDIX 1
HB495
PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date April 30, 2007

Person Reviewing Linnaea Schroeer-Smith

Project Location: Four Corners FAS. T01N, R03E; Section 12 in Gallatin County.

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to implement site-protection measures at Four-Corners FAS by closing off a loop road and developing a new parking lot near the entrance. Selective thinning of vegetation on the site would also be a part of the project.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check ☐ all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- ☐ **A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?**
Comments: None
- ☐ **B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?**
Comments: None
- ☐ **C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?**
Comments: None
- ☒ **D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?**
Comments: A new 10-stall gravel parking area would be developed over undisturbed ground at the site.
- ☐ **E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?**
Comments: None.
- ☐ **F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?**
Comments: None
- ☐ **G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?**
Comments: SHPO clearance has been obtained for the proposed project. Please see Attachment B.

☐ H. **Any new above ground utility lines?**

Comments: None

☐ I. **Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?**

Comments: None.

☐ J. **Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?**

Comments: None

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX 2

Sensitive Plants and Animals in the Four Corners FAS area.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) element occurrence database (nhp.nris.state.mt.us/eoportal) indicates no known occurrences of federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed threatened or endangered plant or animal species in the proposed project site.

Montana Species of Concern. The term "**Species of Concern**" includes taxa that are at-risk or potentially at-risk due to rarity, restricted distribution, habitat loss, and/or other factors. The term also encompasses species that have a special designation by organizations or land management agencies in Montana, including: Bureau of Land Management Special Status and Watch species; U.S. Forest Service Sensitive and Watch species; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Threatened, Endangered and Candidate species.

▼ Status Ranks (Global and State)

The international network of Natural Heritage Programs employs a standardized ranking system to denote global (**G** -- range-wide) and state status (**S**) (NatureServe 2003). Species are assigned numeric ranks ranging from 1 (critically imperiled) to 5 (demonstrably secure), reflecting the relative degree to which they are "at-risk". Rank definitions are given below. A number of factors are considered in assigning ranks -- the number, size and distribution of known "occurrences" or populations, population trends (if known), habitat sensitivity, and threat. Factors in a species' life history that make it especially vulnerable are also considered (e.g., dependence on a specific pollinator).

Status Ranks

Code	Definition
G1 S1	At high risk because of extremely limited and/or rapidly declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it highly vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G2 S2	At risk because of very limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, making it vulnerable to global extinction or extirpation in the state.
G3 S3	Potentially at risk because of limited and/or declining numbers, range, and/or habitat, even though it may be abundant in some areas.
G4 S4	Uncommon but not rare (although it may be rare in parts of its range), and usually widespread. Apparently not vulnerable in most of its range, but possibly cause for long-term concern.
G5 S5	Common, widespread, and abundant (although it may be rare in parts of its range). Not vulnerable in most of its range.

1. *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (Bald Eagle)

State: **S3**
Global: **G5**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: **LT, PDL**
U.S. Forest Service: **Threatened**
U.S. Bureau of Land Management: **Special Status**

Bald Eagles have been observed on the Gallatin River approximately 1 mile from the proposed project site. While Bald Eagles have not been observed utilizing habitat found within the Four Corners FAS, it is possible that they are an infrequent visitor to the site. However, the proposed project site is located in a brushy area away from the river and directly adjacent to the road, so it is unlikely that bald eagles, if they did visit Four Corners FAS, have used or would use the project site.

Interested parties may contact MFWP Region 7 offices for a detailed map of sensitive species Element Occurrences (EOs).

Information courtesy of Montana Natural Heritage Program.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Tourism Report
- B. SHPO Clearance Letter

ATTACHMENT A
TOURISM REPORT
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below.

Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
1424 9th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Four Corners FAS Improvement Project

Project Location: Four Corners FAS, Gallatin County.

Project Description: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to implement site-protection measures at Four-Corners FAS by closing off a loop road and developing a new parking lot near the entrance. The proposed action is intended to reduce the level of garbage dumping and other illegal activities on the site.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?

NO

YES

If YES, briefly describe:

The Four Corners FAS EA states that legitimate users of the FAS have been staying away because of the garbage dumping and partying that happens at the site. Not sure that the proposed project will fully address this situation, but the parking and site safety improvements will benefit users. The problems seem more management related, than facility related. If the project is successful in stopping the problem behavior and bringing legitimate users back to the site, there could be benefits to the area's tourism economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

NO

YES

If YES, briefly describe:

As described in the Four Corners FAS EA, the project is an attempt to improve access and cleanliness of the site. The parking area should improve the quality of the site and safety for users and those walking along the CTEP trail.

Signature Victor A. Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator, Travel Montana

Date May 15, 2007

File 368A.1



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

225 North Roberts ♦ P.O. Box 201201 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-1201
♦ (406) 444-2694 ♦ FAX (406) 444-2696 ♦ www.montanahistoricalsociety.org ♦

April 13, 2006

RECEIVED

APR 17 2006

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
DEPT. OF FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Bardell Mangum
FWP
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701

RE: FOUR CORNERS FAS IMPROVEMENTS. SHPO Project #: 2006041309


Dear Mr. Mangum:

I have conducted a cultural resource file search for the above-cited project located in Section 12, T1N R3E. According to our records there have been no previously recorded sites within the designated search locales. The absence of cultural properties in the area does not mean that they do not exist but rather may reflect the absence of any previous cultural resource inventory in the area, as our records indicated none.

We feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. However, should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during this project we would ask that our office be contacted and the site investigated. Thank you for consulting with us.

If you have any further questions or comments you may contact me at (406) 444-7767 or by e-mail at dmurdo@mt.gov.

Sincerely,


Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager

File: FWP/FISH/2006



STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE ♦ 1410 8th Ave ♦ P.O. Box 201202 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-1202
♦ (406) 444-7715 ♦ FAX (406) 444-6575